
EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

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Press Office, 202-226-0853

**Rep. Kildee Statement at Subcommittee Hearing on H.R. 413,
the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act of 2009**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. Dale Kildee (D-MI), author of H.R. 413 and member of the House Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions for hearing on “H.R. 413, the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act of 2009*

I would like to thank all the witnesses for joining us today to look at H.R. 413, the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act, which would enable public safety employees to discuss important work and safety issues with their employers.

This legislation would extend to firefighters, police officers, corrections officers and other public safety officers the basic right to collectively bargain with their employers.

H.R. 413 is identical to legislation which passed the House in the 110th Congress. In 2007, that legislation passed this committee by a nearly unanimous vote of 41 to 1 and passed the house as a suspension bill with a vote of 314 to 97.

We should not forget that firefighters and police men and women risk their lives every day to protect the public.

Yet there are some states in this country that deny them the basic right to discuss workplace issues with their employers – a right many other Americans have.

At the very least, they should be allowed to negotiate for wages, hours, and safe working conditions.

When I was in the state legislature in Michigan, I helped pass legislation that grants all public employees the right to collectively bargain.

In Michigan, this has led to a working environment that effectively protects the public and that both employers and employees can be proud of.

Cooperation between public safety employers and employees reduces fatalities, improves public safety services, and saves the taxpayers money.

While I feel that Michigan is an excellent example of how employer and employee cooperation can benefit everyone, I do not want to impose the same structure on all states.

I recognize that states may have different approaches that would be more effective for that state.

H.R. 413 would merely create a minimum standard that states have the flexibility to implement, regulate and enforce as they see fit.

Many states, such as Michigan, have laws in place that go well beyond H.R. 413, and these states would not be affected by this legislation.

Additionally, this legislation does not allow strikes or lockouts and it preserves management rights.

Firefighters and police officers are very serious about their commitment to public safety.

They deserve the basic right to sit down with their employers and discuss their work conditions.

The reasonableness of this legislation is demonstrated by the wide bipartisan support it has from its nearly 200 cosponsors. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important legislation.

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